

## Existing usage and the names of some Australian birds

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An established convention in zoological nomenclature is that the oldest published scientific name for a taxon has priority. Problems arise when a name in widespread use for a considerable period proves junior to an older name for the same taxon. In the third edition of the *International code of zoological nomenclature* [the 'Code'], Art. 80 required 'existing usage' be maintained until a submission had been made to the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature (ICZN 1985). 'Existing usage' was defined for cases under consideration by ICZN to be 'the most common current usage', with no further definition of 'common' or 'current' in the glossary. Elsewhere in the same edition, it was noted that stability could be permissibly threatened by introducing an older name, if 'an assertion that the senior name has not been used as a valid name during the immediately preceding fifty years is not contradicted, and ... the junior name has been applied to a particular taxon, as its presumably valid name, by at least 5 different authors and in at least 10 publications during the same period' (Art. 79c).

The fourth edition of the Code (ICZN 1999) came into effect on 1 January 2000 and defines 'existing usage' quite differently. The principle of reversal of precedence (Art. 23) rules that, 'prevailing usage must be maintained when the following conditions are both met: '23.9.1.1. the senior synonym or homonym has not been used as a valid name after 1899 and, '23.9.1.2. the junior synonym or homonym has been used for a particular taxon, as its presumed valid name, in at least 25 works, published by at least 10 authors in the immediately preceding 50 years and encompassing a span of not less than 10 years.' As a result, it is now harder to overturn a senior synonym. McAllan (2006) noted that the subspecies of Lesser Shrikebill from Kadavu (Fiji) had to revert to the senior name *Clytorhynchus vitiensis brunneus* (Ramsay, 1875) rather than *C. v. compressirostris* (Layard, 1876). In this case both conditions of Art. 23 were not met. Even though the older name had not been used since its original publication, the junior name had been used fewer than the requisite 25 times since 1955. In contrast, Scofield *et al.* (2005) demonstrated that in the case of New Zealand Bellbird, the genus-group name *Anthorniza* Swainson, 1837, though senior to *Anthornis* G. R. Gray, 1840, cannot be applied under the current criteria of the Code. In this instance, the junior name has been used many times since 1955. However, if the older name had been used only once as a valid name since 1899, it would have been available.

Thus, it is obvious that the status of older, seemingly unused senior synonyms becomes uncertain, if they were not resolved by a ruling of the ICZN before the fourth edition came into force. In some avian nomenclatural publications of the

1990s it became the vogue to invoke Art. 80 of the third edition to maintain 'existing usage'. Yet in each case, no submission was made to the ICZN to suppress the older synonyms. The question remains as to their validity.

Schodde & Mason (1997) listed several taxa for which they proposed that the older name should be suppressed by the ICZN (all covered here). Upon examination, some of these older names have not been used as valid names since their publication, or at least not since 1899. These include:

- the genus-group name for Topknot Pigeon, *Lophorynchus* Swainson, 1837, senior to *Lopholaimus* Gould, 1841 [not a homonym of *Lophorhynchus* Vieillot, 1816];
- the genus-group name for the Galah, *Cackatto* Lauder & Brown, 1833, senior to *Eolophus* Bonaparte, 1854 [not suppressed in the case of conservation of the related genus *Cacatua*, case 1647 of the ICZN, see Bock & Schodde (1998)];
- the species-group name for the south-east Australian population of Rainbow Lorikeet *Psittacus multicolor* Gmelin, 1788, senior to *Psittacus moluccanus* (Gmelin, 1788); the first revisor was Wagler (1832) who chose *P. multicolor* as the name for the taxon;
- the species-group name for Oriental Cuckoo, *Cuculus striatus* Drapiez, 1823, *C. tenuirostris* Boie, 1828, *C. barbatus* Boie, 1828, and *C. assimilis* Brehm, 1843 (June); all possibly senior to *C. saturatus* Hodgson, 1843, and definitely senior to *C. optatus* Gould, 1845, if the species is split as advocated by Payne (2005);
- the species-group name for Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo, *Sylvia versicolora* 'Latham, 1802' [*sic*, = 1801], senior to *Cuculus basalis* Horsfield, 1821.

In each case the junior name has been in regular use in the last 50 years and in these instances the principle of reverse of precedence (ICZN 1999: 23.9.1.1 and 23.9.1.2) can and should be applied, with the commonly used junior synonym maintained as the valid name. Nonetheless, the other, apparently unused, senior synonyms referred to by Schodde & Mason (1997) are not so easily dismissed.

***Psittacus hypopolius* J. R. Forster, 1794**, senior to both *Platycercus cooki* G. R. Gray, 1859 (the Norfolk Island population of Red-crowned Parakeet), and *Plectolophus productus* Gould, 1836 (Gould 1836a; Norfolk Island Kaka). These are the two parrots originally found on Norfolk Island and both junior species-group names are regularly used. Forster's original description notes that the bird was 'einen grossen grünen Papagay' and undoubtedly refers to Red-crowned Parakeet, not the extinct Norfolk Island Kaka. The parakeet is almost all green, whilst the Kaka was a largely brown bird with red rump, belly and undertail-coverts, yellow to orange cheeks, and variable yellow chest (Gould 1865, Calaby 1989, Forshaw & Cooper 2002). This suggests that *Psittacus hypopolius* J. R. Forster, 1794, is the valid name for the Norfolk Island Red-crowned Parakeet. However, the only uses of

*P. hypopolius* in the 20th century were by Iredale (1937) and Mathews (1946), both of whom applied the name incorrectly to the Kaka, meaning that *P. hypopolius* has not been used in a valid sense since 1899. The principle of reverse of precedence (ICZN 1999: 23.9.1.1, 23.9.1.2) should be applied in this case. *Psittacus hypopolius* J. R. Forster 1794, must be suppressed and the commonly used junior synonym *Platycercus cooki* G. R. Gray, 1859, maintained as the valid name for this population of Red-crowned Parakeet, and *Plectolophus productus* Gould, 1836, be maintained as the valid name for the Norfolk Island Kaka (Schodde & Mason 1997).

***Columba norfolciensis* Latham, 1801**, was based on two birds, a ‘male’ and a ‘female’, reportedly from Norfolk Island. The ‘male’ appears to be a *Gallicolumba* sp. and the ‘female’ an Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps indica* (Linnaeus, 1758) (see Hindwood 1965). The identity and thus status of the ‘male’ is questionable. The name *C. norfolciensis* certainly suggests it was collected at Norfolk Island. A dove similar to a *Gallicolumba* was painted by John Hunter when he was on the island in 1790 or 1791 (now in the National Library of Australia, Canberra, Hunter Sketchbook painting no. 89: Hindwood 1965, Calaby 1989; and incorrectly cited as being in the ‘Sydney’ series in Holdaway & Anderson 2001). The painting matches Latham’s description. Rich *et al.* (1983) and Meredith (1985) also identified subfossil bones of a *Gallicolumba* in deposits from the island. Nonetheless, Schodde & Mason (1997) suggested that, as the description is not conclusively linked with the depicted bird or with the subfossil material, the name *C. norfolciensis* should be suppressed. Another alternative, not offered by Schodde & Mason, is to select either John Hunter’s painting or one of the *Gallicolumba* bones from Norfolk Island as a neotype. The original status of Emerald Dove on Norfolk Island is also unclear. It was first recorded there by Hull (1910) who stated that locals believed the species was introduced from the Solomons (where *Chalcophaps indica* only occurs in the Santa Cruz group). Schodde *et al.* (1983) suggested the species was self-introduced to Norfolk Island, possibly in the 19th century (Holdaway *et al.* 2001). However, the description of the ‘female’ by Latham suggests it was present on the island when Europeans arrived in the 18th century. Emerald Dove was also originally thought to have arrived on nearby Lord Howe Island in the late 19th century, but was certainly there when first visited by an ornithologist, in 1853 (McAllan *et al.* 2004). Whether or not the species was originally present on Norfolk Island awaits confirmation of the age of the subfossil deposits. Although the name *Columba norfolciensis* Latham, 1801, was based on two different taxa, at this stage it cannot be identified definitely with either candidate species. It may thus be considered a *nomen dubium*; not belonging in the synonymy of any species. This may change with a reappraisal of the subfossil material, and a neotype selected to validate the name.

***Columba picata* Latham, 1801**, vs. *Columba melanoleuca* Latham, 1801, for Wonga Pigeon. In this instance, both names were published on the same page of the same work. Mathews (1911) chose *C. melanoleuca* over *C. picata* on the basis of

line priority. However, Schodde & Mason noted that the first revisor was Strickland (1843), who chose *C. picata*. *C. picata* (as *Leucosarcia picata*) was consistently used as the valid name through the 19th century and into the 20th century. Although Schodde & Mason (1997) suggested that *L. melanoleuca* was used consistently following Mathews' 1911 paper, *L. picata* was regularly used in *Emu* until 1920. As *Columba picata* Latham, 1801, was regularly used as valid in the 20th century, this precludes invoking the principle of reverse of precedence (ICZN 1999: 23.9.1.1, 23.9.1.2). *Columba picata* Latham, 1801, should be reinstated as the senior synonym for Wonga Pigeon, and *Columba melanoleuca* Latham, 1801, placed in its synonymy.

***Geopelia tranquilla* Gould, 1844**, vs. *Geopelia placida* Gould, 1844, for the Australian population of Peaceful Dove. These names were again published in the same work. Mathews (1908) chose *G. placida* over *G. tranquilla* for the species-group name, but the first revisor was Gould himself, in part XIX of *The birds of Australia* (Gould 1845). Gould chose *G. tranquilla* over *G. placida*, which was consistently followed until Mathews' action. *G. tranquilla* has at various times been applied as a valid subspecies throughout the 20th century until the present (e.g. Goodwin 1970, Frith 1981, Gibbs *et al.* 2001), and as a species in *Emu* until 1944. *Geopelia tranquilla* Gould, 1844, is the senior synonym for the Australian population of Peaceful Dove and its regular valid use to the present precludes invoking the principle of reverse of precedence (ICZN 1999: 23.9.1.1, 23.9.1.2). It should be reinstated as the senior synonym for this population and *Geopelia placida* Gould, 1844, placed in its synonymy.

***Columba argetraea* J. R. Forster, 1794**, vs. *Columba spadicea* Latham, 1801, for the extinct Norfolk Island subspecies of New Zealand Pigeon *Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*. As noted by Schodde & Mason (1997), *C. argetraea* J. R. Forster, 1794, is senior to *C. spadicea* Latham, 1801. Furthermore, they also pointed out that the name was used by Iredale (1937) and Mathews (1946). In fact, it would be difficult to find 25 uses of *Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae spadicea* since 1955. *Columba argetraea* J. R. Forster, 1794, has been used since 1899, precluding invoking the principle of reversal of precedence (ICZN 1999: 23.9.1.1, 23.9.1.2) and should be reinstated with *Columba spadicea* Latham, 1801, as a synonym.

Schodde & Mason (1999) proposed that a further two taxa should be conserved by the act of suppression of apparently unused senior synonyms by the ICZN.

***Menura superba* Davies, 1802**, vs. *Menura novaehollandiae* Latham, '1802' [=1801], for Superb Lyrebird. Browning & Monroe (1991) determined that the date of Latham's *Supplementum Indicis Ornithologici* to be 1802, based on notice of the publication of the English-language version being announced at the Royal Society on 1 April 1802, and that some copies have the title page hand-corrected to 1802.

Given this, as Latham's work is not accurately dated further, under the Code its date becomes 31 December 1802. One consequence is that *Menura superba* Davies, 1802 (published 5 June 1802), would be the senior name. Schodde & Mason (1999) stated that *M. novaehollandiae* has been used almost universally since 1926, but this is clearly not true. *M. superba* was regularly used in the first 50 years of the *Emu* and other recent usage includes Chisholm (1967), Department of the Interior (1968), Lavery (1969), Chisholm (1974), Slater (1974) and Macdonald (1984). If the date of Latham's Latin-language work is taken as 31 December 1802, *Menura superba* Davies, 1802, would appear available and valid, and the senior synonym for Superb Lyrebird. However, the Code notes that the 'date specified' in the work must be used unless there is contrary evidence (ICZN 1999: 21.1). In the French-language version of this Article the wording is even stronger as it requires 'preuve' [proof], that is, more than just evidence. In this instance there is no concrete proof that the Latin-language edition of the work appeared later than 1801. Until there is proof that Latham's work was published later than 5 June 1802, the Superb Lyrebird must remain as *Menura novaehollandiae* Latham, 1801. Though this argument may seem weak, the same logic is applied to the dating of many works and thus names, e.g., use of the genus-group name *Nymphicus* Wagler, 1832 in preference to *Leptolophus* Swainson, '1833', for Cockatiel *N. hollandicus* (Kerr, 1792) (see Schodde & Mason 1997). Ultimately, the date of Latham's work may require an application to the ICZN.

**Zanthomiza Swainson, 1837**, vs. *Xanthomyza* Strickland, 1841, for the genus-group name of Regent Honeyeater. The author of *Xanthomyza* is Strickland (1841) rather than Reichenbach (1852), as given by Christidis & Boles (1994). Strickland's use of *Xanthomyza* was to correct transliteration from Greek to Latin, though such changes are invalid under the Code. It was intended that a submission to suppress *Zanthomiza* was to be sent to the ICZN as long ago as 1960 by the Standing Committee on Ornithological Nomenclature of the International Ornithological Conference (Salomonsen 1960), but as no ruling has been published there is no evidence this occurred. In this case, the name in most common usage in 1960, *Zanthomiza*, was erroneously proposed for suppression. *Zanthomiza* has been used in the last 50 years, as shown by Christidis & Boles (1994). Therefore *Zanthomiza* Swainson, 1837, is valid and available, and a senior synonym of *Xanthomyza* Strickland, 1841. *Zanthomiza* cannot be suppressed under the principle of reversal of precedence (ICZN 1999: 23.9.1.1, 23.9.1.2) and should be reinstated as the genus-group name. This result may not be an issue in current nomenclature. Driskell & Christidis (2004) reviewed DNA sequence data for the honeyeaters (Meliphagidae) and found that *Zanthomiza* is best placed amongst Australian wattlebirds *Anthochaera* Vigors & Horsfield, 1827.

Bruce & McAllan (1990) noted numerous names that first appeared in popular periodicals published in London in the mid 19th century and antedate their publication in scientific serials. Amongst these were several contentious names

where the spelling differed between the accounts or had different application to the current usage. Again, two of these names from Australia have not been treated as valid in the original spelling since 1899, and should be suppressed under the principle of reversal of precedence (ICZN 1999: 23.9.1.1, 23.9.1.2).

- *Pedionomus* Gould, 1840 (31 October) [referring to Mallee Fowl], senior to *Pedionomus* Gould, 1841 (May) [Plains-wanderer]; and
- *Atricha* Gould, 1844 (27 January), senior to *Atrichia* Gould, 1844 (1 March).

Alternatively these names could be considered incorrect subsequent spellings (ICZN 1999: Art. 33). In both cases Gould did not emend the names as he did not refer to the original publication of the names.

One additional name cited by Bruce & McAllan does not fit this category.

***Aplornis* Gould, 1836** (Gould 1836b), vs. *Aplonis* Gould, 1836 (Gould 1836c), the genus-group name for Pacific starlings. As noted by Mathews (1938), *Aplornis* is senior to *Aplonis* by over two weeks. Gould did not refer to the *Aplornis* spelling in subsequent works and thus did not emend the name. *Aplornis* has been used in the 20th century including by Taka-Tsukasa & Yamashina (1931), Mathews (1938, 1945, 1946), Hachisuka *et al.* (1942) and Bruce & McAllan (1990). David & Gosselin (2002) also quoted Bruce & McAllan (1990) for the name's origin and derivation  $\alpha\pi\lambda\omicron\omicron\sigma$  aploos: simple;  $\omicron\rho\nu\iota\sigma$  ornis: bird], but used the incorrect spelling *Aplonis*. *Aplornis* is available and valid under the Code and is the senior synonym of *Aplonis* Gould, 1836. As it has been used since 1899, *Aplornis* Gould, 1836, cannot be suppressed under the principle of reversal of precedence (ICZN 1999: 23.9.1.1, 23.9.1.2) and should be reinstated as the genus-group name for the Pacific starlings, with *Aplonis* Gould, 1836, placed in synonymy.

In addition to the names quoted above, there is another example amongst Australian bird names where the first revisor has been incorrectly cited.

***Psilopus albogularis* Gould, 1838**, vs. *Psilopus olivaceus* Gould, 1838, for White-throated Gerygone. Mathews (1920) believed that the first revisor of these names was Stone (1913). However, it was Gould himself in his octavo volume *An introduction to the birds of Australia* (Gould 1848), which was published on or before 29 August 1848. (A copy in the State Library of New South Wales (09: S598.2991/19) is inscribed 'William Rees Esq. with the respects of the Author' in ink, and the date 'Aug<sup>t</sup>. 29. 1848' in pencil, presumably the date of receipt.) Herein, Gould lists: '*Gerygone albogularis*, Gould .... Vol. II. Pl. 97' and in synonymy immediately below '*Psilopus olivaceus*, Gould in *Proc. Zool. Soc.*, Part V. p. 147, Young.' *Psilopus albogularis* (as *Gerygone albogularis*) was consistently used in the 19th century as the valid name. In the *Emu*, *Gerygone albogularis* was used consistently until 1912 and sporadically to 1924. Thus the principle of reversal of

precedence (ICZN 1999: 23.9.1.1, 23.9.1.2) cannot be invoked and *Gerygone albogularis* (Gould, 1838) is an available and valid name for the White-throated Gerygone and *Psilopus olivaceus* Gould, 1838, should be placed in synonymy.

## Summary

Of the 18 older names for Australian taxa discussed here, only six can currently be reinstated: *Leucosarcia picata* (Latham, 1801); *Geopelia tranquilla* Gould, 1844; *Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae argetraea* (Forster, 1794); *Zanthomiza* Swainson, 1837; *Aplornis* Gould, 1836; and *Gerygone albogularis* (Gould, 1838). Of these, it is probable that *Zanthomiza* will soon be used only as a subgenus. The status of *Gallicolumba norfolciensis* (Latham, 1801) and *Menura superba* Davies, 1802, are still to be satisfactorily resolved and may be used following further clarification.

Although this note concerns only Australian genus- and species-group names, such issues are widespread in avian nomenclature. For example, Bock (1994) cited numerous family-group names that, for various reasons, he believed should be suppressed by the ICZN. Apparently a 'provisional submission' was sent to the ICZN by Bock but later withdrawn (Olson 1995). Olson noted many problems with Bock's publication including the erection of numerous new family-group names. Bock also considered many apparently older names to be valid, even though their authors had no intention to describe the group as a family in the work cited. Olson suggested that, given the extent of the problems arising from its publication, Bock's work was a candidate for suppression for the purposes of nomenclature. The problems outlined by Olson have yet to be fully addressed.

Nevertheless, the number of name changes due to priority are minuscule compared to the large-scale changes wrought by alterations due to taxonomic treatment. Olson (1987) noted 276 significant name changes between the American Ornithologists' Union's Check-list of 1957 and that of 1983, with only 6% being due to nomenclatural issues of priority and homonymy. Olson noted that even in a well-known avifauna such as North America its names are inherently unstable and likely to remain so. In an Australian sense this is still also true. The number of name changes between the passerine section of the most recent Australian list (Christidis & Boles 1994) and Schodde & Mason's passerine volume (1999) amounts to 34. Advanced drafts of the new species list (Christidis & Boles in prep.) contain at least 29 changes in the passerines between the two editions, several not covered by Schodde & Mason. As noted by Olson, North American ornithologists have learnt to live with an occasional justified nomenclatural change and no doubt Australian ornithologists will do the same.

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## The type-localities of six of Sir Andrew Smith's Ploceidae specimens

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Sir Andrew Smith lived in South Africa from 1821 to 1837, mainly in Grahamstown and Algoa Bay (i.e. Port Elizabeth), Eastern Cape, and Cape Town, Western Cape (Kirby 1965). A British military doctor, he also collected a great many zoological specimens. Smith's descriptions of these appeared in the *Illustrations of the zoology of South Africa*, published in 1838–49 (Waterhouse 1880, reprinted in Smith 1977), and in earlier publications including the *South African Commercial Advertiser*, *South African Quarterly Journal* and an expedition report, many of which were collated by Salvin (1880). Several volumes of unpublished notes exist in the Transvaal Museum, South African Museum and Government Archives in Cape Town (Kirby 1965). Roberts (1936) published notes of the material in the Transvaal Museum.

Smith included 12 weavers in his *Illustrations* (Table 1), of which six are currently recognised type species (Clancey 1980; Table 2), though several type descriptions were published prior to the *Illustrations*. The ambit of the present paper is limited to investigating the type-localities of these six weavers.